

NATURAL RESOURCE BASED CONFLICTS IN TANA RIVER COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Though the conflict in Tana River has been on and off for a long time, it has heightened in the recent past to worrying proportions. This has led to a need for further analysis of the conflict to unearth the other factors which may be fuelling the conflict. The emerging factors may include political influence, availability of firearms, from unstable neighboring countries and alienation of large tracts of land for agricultural production. Another factor which may be contributing to conflict is the perceived or actual marginalization of the communities by the state who has systematically failed to adequately respond and address the conflicts, which has led to communities arming themselves against their rival groups. The overall objective of this study was to analyze the causes and impacts of conflicts on the social and economic development in Tana River County. Specific objectives are: (1) to establish the factors that has continued to enhance conflicts; and (2) to assess the

economic effects of the conflict in Tana River. The literature reviewed includes secondary data concerning conflicts, pastoralism and food security, with specific reference to Tana River. The literature covers detailed study on pastoralism in Kenya and the attendant conflicts. A major stakeholder in Tana river was analyzed to elucidate their roles in the conflicts and conflict resolution. In this study the conceptual framework of interaction is applied to explain the various relationships. The frame work shows that there are many factors that lead to conflicts and the factors can be classified as immediate Intermediate and Structural. The frame work also recognizes that there are various actors in the conflict and this include: pastoralists, farmers, fisher folk, leaders, administrators, CSOs, NGOs, government, women and children.

Key Words: *marginalization, alienation, economic development, natural resource based, conflicts, Tana River County, Kenya*

INTRODUCTION

Natural resources are an integral part of society, as a source of income, industry, and identity.

Developing countries tend to be more dependent on natural resources as their primary source of income, and many individuals depend on these resources for their livelihoods. It is estimated that half of the world's population remains directly tied to local natural resources; many rural communities depend upon agriculture, fisheries, minerals and, timber as their main sources of income (USIP 2007).

The prospect of financial gain is seldom the primary motivation for rebellion, but for some it can become a satisfactory way of life. This is a further reason why the participants in a civil war should not be left to fight it out among themselves. Some evidence suggests that decade by decade, civil wars have been getting longer. While this may be due to circumstances in

individual countries, it more likely reflects global changes that have made civil wars easier to sustain by allowing rebel groups to raise finance and acquire armaments more easily. The Pokomo are mainly farmers and subscribe to individual land ownership. On the other hand the Orma are mainly pastoralists and believe in communal land ownership and use of land, pasture and water resources

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The conflict has transformed and is beyond local solutions due to – economic and political marginalization, active resistance to assimilation, resource depletion, demographic changes, climatic conditions, cattle rustling, small arms, government policies. This study aims to understand the causes and effects of the conflicts in Tana River County. Though the conflict in Tana River has been on and off for a long time, it has heightened in the recent past to worrying proportions. This has led to a need for further analysis of the conflict to unearth the other factors which may be fuelling the conflict. Tana River is one of the least developed regions in the country with vast land mass, high rates of poverty and very poor infrastructure, all these exacerbate the feeling of insecurity and hence the need for self-protection using whatever means.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of this study is to analyze the causes and impacts of conflicts on the social and economic development in Tana River County.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To establish the factors that have continued to enhance conflicts
2. Asses the economic effects of the conflict in Tana River

LITERATURE REVIEW

The conflict among the communities living in Tana River County is historical dating back to the 17th century, when they started settling along the Tana River from the different origins in Ethiopia and Somali (KHRC 2012). Adan and Pkalya (2005) in their study found out that conflicts led to serious socioeconomic effects namely, loss of livestock, human deaths, displacement of people, effect on delivery of social services including closure of hospitals and schools, agricultural land left fallow, food insecurity, and flight of pastoralists from high potential grazing lands leading to livestock losses due to starvation.

Water makes or breaks relationships. The linkages between water scarcity, peace and development are exceptionally obvious in the countries of the Nile River Basin (Erick2011). This is also applicable to the case study because the Tana River is a source of water for the communities and hence sporadic skirmishes may be witnessed especially during drought.

Theoretical Framework

Durkheim (1858–1917) saw society as a functioning organism. Functionalism concerns "the effort to impute, as rigorously as possible, to each feature, custom, or practice, its effect on the functioning of a supposedly stable, cohesive system, The chief form of social conflict that Durkheim addressed was crime. Durkheim saw crime as "a factor in public health, an integral part of all healthy societies." The collective conscience defines certain acts as "criminal." Crime thus plays a role in the evolution of morality and law: It implies not only that the way remains open to necessary changes but that in certain cases it directly prepares these changes.

Modern Approaches

Inequality on a global level is characterized by the purposeful underdevelopment of Third World countries, both during colonization and after national independence. The global system (i.e., development agencies such as World Bank and International Monetary Fund) benefits the most powerful countries and multi-national corporations, rather than the subjects of development, through economic, political, and military actions.

Conflict can be defined as ‘a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources’ (Jeong, 2008). The environment can be a conflict contribution factor. It can also be a means to resolve (for instance, via the potential to reduce poverty (Collie et al., 2003; Matthew et al., 2009) pollution of ecosystem services and goods can lead to resource scarcity and scarcity or poor management of resources combined with other factors such as attitudes and behavior, cultural practices, and social, political and economic conditions may contribute to conflict (Homer-Dixon, 1999; Jeong, 2008; Matthew et al., 2009; Renner, 2006; Shewartz et al., 2000). Conflict itself is “neither good nor bad” and thus if managed appropriately can lead to resolution (Jeong, 2008), but this requires the interest and aspirations of the stakeholders involved and the political will to resolve the issues fairly.

Research Gaps

Some work has been done on conflicts assessing conflicts based on political interferences and also on cattle rustling in the north rift and also the upper eastern and north eastern counties of Kenya like Turkana, West Pokot, Samburu, Laikipia, Marsabit, Wajir and Mandera. However the studies on Tana River have dwelt on political and inter clan animosity but none of the studies except the one done by Anne Gakuria in 2012 have attempted to analyze the natural resource basis of the conflict.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Land Owned

As per the findings, majority (92%) of the respondents had less than an acre piece of land while the remaining 8% owned between 1-3 acres of land in Tana River County. This implies that there is farming land scarcity in Tana River County.

Household Characteristics

As per the findings, most (25.6%) of the respondents had two members in their households, 13.7% had 4 members, 12.0% had 6 members while 11 members, 9members, 3 members represented 3.4% of the respondents each. Further the study required the respondents to indicate the number of grown-ups in their households.

Source of Income

As per the findings, majority (75.2%) of the respondents indicated that they had domesticated animals and 24.8% indicated otherwise.

Respondents Experience

According to the findings, most of the respondents had lived in the area for 15-20 years, 20% for 10-15 years, 18% for over 20 years, 17% for 5-10 years and only 3% of the respondents had lived in the area for less than one year. This implies that the respondents had lived in area for long enough to have experienced the different heights of violence in the area.

Last Conflict Encountered

As per the findings, majority (55.6%) of the respondents indicated that the last time they experienced conflict was 3-5 years ago, 21.4% this year, 13.4% last year and 9.4% 5-10 years ago.

Conflict Factors

As per the findings, 81.2% and 73.5% of the respondents indicated that land tenure and Minimum Security Presence respectively did not act as a conflict factor while 65.8% of the respondents indicated that Divergent land needs as conflict factor.

Cope with Conflicts

Results show 86.3% of the respondents indicated that relief food was not a method of coping with conflicts in Tana River County, 96.6% indicated that peace talks was a method of coping with conflicts, 88.9% of the respondents indicated that Alternative Livelihood was not a way of

coping with conflicts while 88% indicated that relocation was not a way of dealing with conflicts.

Socio Economic Impacts of the Natural Resource Based Conflicts in Tana River County

According to the findings majority (77.8%) of the respondents indicated that natural resource based conflicts in Tana River County, 53% indicated that there was crop theft, 12% indicated that there was lack of access to markets, 50.45% indicated that there was rotting of produce in the farms, while 96.6% of the respondents indicated that crop land was abandoned.

Livestock Farming

According to the findings, the majority (88%) of the respondents indicated that there was no Collapse of livestock marketing, 94% indicated that Grazing Land was abandoned, 93.2% indicated that Small arms trade did not increase, 80.3% indicated that there was overgrazing in safer grounds while 94% of the respondents indicated that there was destruction of biodiversity.

Education

100% of the respondents indicated that there was closure of Schools and low enrolment in the Existing Schools and 71.8% of the respondents indicated that Teachers Relocated to Safer Places

Health

According to the findings, 92.3% of the respondents indicated that there was no increased human and livestock diseases, 93.2% indicated there was no closure of health facilities and flight of health personnel each, 97.4% indicated that there was increased reports of injured people in the local health centers while 75.2% of the respondents indicated that there was no withdrawal of health personnel.

Restitution/Rehabilitation of Victims

According to the findings, 77.8% of the respondents indicated that Restocking as way in which conflict in Tana River County was managed and how victims were rehabilitated, 100% indicated that disarming the youth was not a way in which conflicts in Tana River County were managed and rehabilitating the victims, 88.9% indicated that Introduction of modern farming was not a way in which conflicts in Tana river county were managed and rehabilitating the victims, 75.2% indicated that rehabilitate irrigation schemes was not a way in which conflicts in Tana river county were managed and rehabilitating the victims, 100% indicated that peace building among the communities was used as a way in which conflicts in Tana river county were managed and rehabilitating the victims while 83.8% of the respondents indicated that courts was not a way in which conflicts in Tana river county were managed and rehabilitating the victims.

Somali-Tana River conflicts Connection

According to the findings, 54.7 % of the respondents indicated that the conflict in Somali had influence on the conflict dynamic in Tana River County while 45.3% indicated otherwise. Further the study sought to understand how conflict in Somali had influence on the conflict dynamic in Tana River County. 84.4 % of the respondents indicated that the Grazing Land was not Limited, 78.1% indicated that Small and Light Arms were not available, 79.7% indicated that Insecurity in the forests where pastoralists used to graze their animals during dry season was not there, 46.9% indicated that Recruitment of Local Youths into the Armed Conflicts was there while 34.4% of the respondents indicated that there was immigration of herders from Somali.

Land Allocation for Investment

According to the findings, 75.2% of the respondents indicated that the land allocation for investment had impact on conflict dynamic in the Tana River County while 24.8% indicated otherwise. Further for those had positive response on the land allocation for investment and impact on conflict dynamic in the Tana River County were required to indicate how they affected them. 100% of the respondents indicated that Land allocation to outsiders, Lack of traditional dry season grazing fields, Closure of livestock corridors were not effects of land allocation for investment in Tana River County while 3.4 % of the respondents indicated that Conflicts arising from employment opportunities was an effect of land allocation for investment in Tana River County.

Rationale, Motives and Aims

Natural resources (Mean=4.0769) was the main cause and reason for the latest conflict they witnessed, Revenge (Mean=2.6667) rated as a neutral factor while Hatred (Mean=2.2051), Pure violence (Mean=2.1538), Displacement (Mean=2.0855), Provocation (Mean=1.8547), Defense (Mean= 1.8547) and Intimidation (Mean=1.5212) were rated as of little importance as causes and reasons for conflicts in Tana River County. From the findings, respondents rated stopping opponents from destroying their livelihood (Mean=4.7094) as very important aim of involvement in the last conflict, while most respondents rated Displacing them from the delta (Mean=2.2991) and showing their opponents their strength (Mean=1.9487) as aims of little importance while respondents rated Gain of political power (Mean=1.4701), Unification of our community (Mean=1.2906) and Intimidation of the other group (Mean=1.2735) as aims of no importance at all of the community involvement in the last conflict.

Opponent aims of involvement in the last Conflict

From the findings, it was rated Displacing them from the delta (Mean=2.4017), Gain of political power (Mean=2.2564), protecting their livelihood (Mean=1.8718) and showing the community their strength (Mean=1.7521) were rated as aims of little importance of the others involvement in

the last conflict while Intimidation of the other group (Mean=1.3333) and Unification of our community (Mean=1.1709) were rated as aims of no importance of others involvement in latest conflicts. Using an open ended question the study sought to investigate whether clashes were started by a community or an individual. Most of the respondents indicated that the clashes were started by communities while others indicated that clashes were started by individuals.

Politics and Conflicts

According to the findings, majority (72.6%) of the respondents indicated that clashes could not allow people vote, 99.1% indicated that conflicts led to stronger group coherence for community members and would vote for their own while 100% of the respondents indicated that People could not vote for any leader regardless of ethnicity.

Government involvement in Solving Conflict

From the findings, respondents rated holding peace meetings (Mean=4.1453), as an important role played by the government in solving conflicts while Disarmament (Mean=2.9402), Sending government officials (Mean=2.7607), Curfew (Mean=2.6496), Arrested some community members (Mean=2.6496) were rated as roles of moderate importance in the involvement of government in solving conflicts. Further the respondents indicated that Establishment of new police posts (Mean=2.2991), Deployment general service unit (GSU) (Mean=2.2735), Set a commission of inquiry (Mean=2.1197) and Sending food aid (Mean=1.5470) were rated as of little importance in solving conflicts by the government in Tana River County.

Conflict Resolution

According to the findings, majority (63.2%) of the respondents indicated that Land allocation could not be to solve the problem of natural resource based conflicts in Tana River country to enhance peace, 41% indicated that Intercommunity sports activities could be used, 88.9% indicated that Regular peace meetings could be used, 44.4% indicated that Develop more water points could be used, 47% Creation of more grazing corridors could be used, 76.9% indicated that Enacting appropriate by laws could be used, 100% indicated that Encourage intermarriage could not be used. 86.3% indicated that Encourage religious tolerance could not be used while 88.9% indicated that Inter-ethnic schools could be established to solve the problem of natural resource based conflicts in Tana River County to enhance peace.

Role of Devolution in Conflict Management in Tana River County

The study used an open ended question to investigate role of devolution in conflict management in Tana River County. Most of the respondents indicated that the devolution of powers to the county had helped the residents in dealing with conflicts in the manner that fits them most without using the central government. Different counties deal with conflicts in different means

and this was given an upper hand by devolution. Some indicated that devolution brought majimbo system which helps the residents concentrate on their issues without central government interference. Others indicated that devolution granted significant autonomy to the counties in terms of executive power, especially on functions that often cause inter-group conflict such as cultural preservation and local development planning.

Benefited from Devolution

As per the findings, majority (70.9%) of the respondents indicated that Schools, Hospitals, roads and transport were the infrastructures that were available to enhance resilience, 28.2% indicated Safe and clean water while 0.9% of the respondents indicated markets as their infrastructure that was available to enhance resilience.

Adequacy of Socio Economic Infrastructure

According to findings, majority (55.6%) of the respondents indicated that socio-economic infrastructure not was adequate for the needs of the community while 44.4% indicated that the socio-economic infrastructure was adequate for the needs of the community in Tana River County.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that the main causes conflicts in Tana River County was the natural resources and these conflicts had massive the social and economic development of Tana River County. The study also concludes that farming was the main economic activity in Tana River County although farming land scarce. Further the study concludes that Access to grazing and Presence of war were in most cases causes of conflicts. Divergent land needs, Negative Ethnicity and water resources were Proximate Conflict Factors. The study there was historical agreement on using the resources in the Tana River County. Further the study concludes that peace talks were a method of coping with conflicts. The study concludes that conflicts affected farming to a great extent such that led reduced farming activities, crop theft, rotting of produce in the farms, crop land was abandoned. Livestock farming was also affected in that grazing land was abandoned, overgrazing in safer grounds leading to destruction of biodiversity. Further the study concludes that education was also affected in that there was closure of schools and low enrolment in the existing schools. Further the study concludes that stopping opponents from destroying their livelihood was a main aim of involvements in the last conflict. The conflicts prohibited people from voting and that they led to stronger group coherence for community members and they could not vote for a person from another ethnic group. Government involvement in solving Conflict is mainly in leading the peace meetings by sending government officials into the affected areas. Finally the study concludes that Schools, Hospitals, roads and transport were the infrastructures that were available to enhance resilience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Tana River County's economic activity being farming the study recommends that the county government in collaboration with the central government set up irrigation schemes in the dry sections of the county which would be managed by the government but the outputs are put aside to feed the residents during the dry spells. Further the study recommends that the county government of Tana River County restrict/control the migration of people in and out of the county from Somalia and this would reduce the number of youth crossing the border to join the Al-shabaab. Also this would help in controlling the entry of arms from outside.

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